

Topeng Kona: A Sacred Dance in the Ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the procession of the ritual '*Bersih Desa*' and analyze the existence of the sacred dance '*Topeng Kona*' as a tool for validating the ritual '*Bersih Desa*' in Blimbing Village, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The intelligence and local wisdom possessed by the ancestors of Blimbing Village, was able to give birth to masterpieces of high noble value in the ritual '*Bersih Desa*', such as '*Topeng Kona*' dance, '*Singo Ulung*' dance, '*Tandhe' Bini*' and '*Ojhung*' dance. The masterpiece was the result of the marriage of two cultures, namely Javanese culture (represented by the figure of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung) and Madurese culture (represented by the figure of Juk Jasiman). The result of the marriage produced a migrant culture with a high value that differed from the culture of the migrant's home region. The sacred dance '*Topeng Kona*' was used as a medium to validate the ritual '*Bersih Desa*' as a form of appreciation for Jasiman figures who came from Madura and became the member of the residents of Blimbing Village.

Keywords

Validation Tool, *bersih desa* ritual, *topeng kona* sacred dance, East Java, Indonesia

Introduction

A culture emerges when people live permanently in one place. It means that they do not migrate from one place to another (nomadic). There are certain factors beyond the birth of a culture, such as natural environment that surrounds human life, ethnical background, and cultural influences outside the community. One of these cultures is in the form of rituals. The rituals performed by the community certainly vary from one place to another. For instance, one of the rituals carried out in China from the Neolithic era to Bronze age, the people carried out rituals by consuming alcoholic drink. The ritual aims to bind the living with the ancestral and supernatural realms (Min, 2021).

In Southern Thailand, the people of “Phru To” believe in “Chao Bao Noi” which is located on Khuan Sung Hill and is believed to be a sacred tree inhabited by the gods. In the past, the people of “Phru To” lived in rice farming and fruit plantations which had to depend on the uncertainties of nature. Residents must learn to struggle to survive adapt to nature, and ask Chao Bao Noi to give them fertility soil. When their wish is fulfilled, they perform a ritual as their obedience for the favor given by Chao Bao Noi (Buakaew, 2018).

Thaipusam Kavadi, a collective ritual performed by Tamil Hindus around the world that involves body piercing and other magnificent activities. The offerings of the ritual participants are based on the social hierarchy of the participants. Participants with low status by doing body piercing, while high-status individuals are more likely to use financial capital, in the form of more material offerings offered to the gods. The rituals performed show that the social hierarchy demands unequal requirements on the participants of the ritual (Xygalatas et al. 2021).

Another thing that happened in Indonesia, society has a huge tie with the habits of holding rituals to honor their ancestors. The ritual is carried to obtain safety and prosperity in their lives. Almost all Javanese people perform the ritual “*Bersih Desa*” as a form of local wisdom (in the form of an expression of gratitude and to commemorate the founder of the forerunner of a village). According to Geertz (1983), an American anthropologist, *Bersih Desa* is a salvation ritual or Javanese traditional ritual to give offerings to *danyang* at the village. The offerings come from the obligation of each family to donate food. The ritual is carried out by the indigenous people to cleanse and purify the village from evil spirits, so that offerings are given to *danyang*, because *danyang* is believed to be the guardian of a village. Thus, *Bersih Desa* was held at the *danyang* tomb. In some villages with a strong Muslim influence, *Bersih Desa* is held at the mosque. The processions are prayers in Muslim. Meanwhile, in some villages that do not have *danyang* tombs, *Bersih Desa* is held at the residence of village head.

According to Koentjaraningrat (1984), this ritual is often associated with the story of Dewi Sri, as the god of farmers. According to the community, the success of the harvest was due to a gift from Dewi Sri who always protects their plants from pests and other disturbances. For Koentjaraningrat, the ritual arises because of the impulse of human feelings to perform various actions aimed at seeking a relationship with the supernatural world (religious behaviour). In this case, humans are overcome by a religious emotion, and this is a sacred act, where all the elements are engaged during the ritual, including objects i.e., ceremonial tools and people who perform the ritual, are considered sacred.

The ritual ‘*Bersih Desa*’ is also interpreted as the expression of gratitude for the rice harvest, so that the ritual is carried out after the rice harvest ends. The time and place of holding the ritual *Bersih Desa* remains a separate consideration. The sacred aspect of both the day and the place is an important consideration, because the day and place will determine the success of the ritual. The reading of the prayer for the ritual is read in a solemn atmosphere, so that the day and time

are always directed to find holiness. Holiness means immortality as a sign of the coming of life salvation (Suwardi, 2006).

The role of the ritual always reminds humans of their existence and relationship with the environment. By the existing ceremonies, people are not only reminded, but are accustomed to using abstract symbols that are positioned at the level of thought for various social activities in everyday life (Ball, 1997).

One of the rituals carried out in Indonesia is *Seren Taun*, a harvest ritual for the Cigugur indigenous people of West Java. The Cigugur people perform the ritual every 18–22 *Rayagung Saka*, the Sundanese calendar. *Seren Taun* is an offering ritual to the Almighty to welcome the rice harvest, as well as a request that next year's harvest be better than the previous year. *Seren Taun* is a series of traditional rituals that upholds the interaction of fertility symbols that are believed by Cigugur community in Kuningan, attached to Dewi's mother, Nyi Pwah Aci Sang Hyang Asri, or also known as Dewi Sri. This is one of the important ceremonies for agrarian Sundanese people. The ritual is also carried out in traditional villages in West Java, such as *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar-Sukabumi and Banten Baduy in South Baduy of Banten (Adisaputri et al. 2015).

The ritual of *Bersih Desa* in Natah Village, Tirtomoyo District, Wonogiri Regency known as *Joged Danyang* is a dance dedicated to the spirits of the ancestors who guard Natah Village. *Joged Danyang*, a dance that is danced by a *tayub* dancer in a position called as '*timpuh*'. The dancers dance in front of Danyang furniture as a symbol of ancestral spirits. The ritual is routinely carried out every *Longkang* month on Thursday (especially *Pahing*). According to the belief of the people of Natah Village, *Longkang* is the month of the formation of the village. The ritual *Bersih Desa* in Natah Village has stages including the preparation stage and implementation stage. At the implementation stage, the most core point in the ritual is *Joged Danyang* dance. The role of the dance in the ritual of *Bersih Desa* in the village has three roles, namely as a form of worship to ancestral spirits as well as communication with gods or the Almighty, a means to influence the forces of nature, and a means of legitimacy. In the ritual, there is an impact from the existence of *Joged Danyang*. This impact provides enormous benefits to the people in the village. Some of the supporting aspects are entertainment, economic and social aspects. *Joged Danyang* is a means of communication and respect for *Danyang* at Natah Village. By the existence of *Joged Danyang*, the people in the village believe that the land will be fertile and prosperous for their family. By performing *Joged Danyang* in the ritual of *Bersih Desa*, the head of Natah Village will achieve his confession of power (Khasanah, 2019).

There are so many rituals (i.e., *Bersih Desa*) carried out by the Javanese people in Indonesia, but those rituals are not the same. This depends on the natural environment, the people who occupy an area, and cultural factors that are absorbed by the community. We were interested in the existence of *Bersih Desa* ritual held in Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency located in East Java, Indonesia. The ritual was held by using a sacred dance *Topeng Kona*. The performers always wore masks during the performance, and wore clothes with a dominant red color. Likewise, the series of rituals carried out in the ritual, such as *Singo Ulung* dance, *Tandhe' Bini'* dance and *Ojhung* dance. The symbol used has its individual meaning as the representation of the indigenous people living there.

There were two focuses that we investigated, namely the implementation of the ritual and the reason underlying the use of *Topeng Kona* as a tool to validate *Bersih Desa* in Blimbing Village.

Methods

This study was historical research by using historical method (Rochwulaningsih, 2016; Maziyah et al. 2016; Hartatik, 2016; Rinardi et al. 2017; Maziyah, 2018; Susilowati and Masruroh, 2018; Puguh and Utama, 2018). In the historical method, the stages we carried out included determining the topic (object of research), heuristics (search for sources or collection of research data), source criticism (data verification), selection and categorization, data analysis, and historical writing (historiography) (Kuntowijoyo, 2003; Black and MacRaild, 2007). This study used Dyson's enculturation theory (Sujarwa, 1999), combined with the mythical concept proposed by Peursen (1988). These theories were used to reveal the existence of the ritual '*Bersih Desa*' in Blimbing Village which was considered sacred by the community, as well as the use of the dance '*Topeng Kona*' as a tool to ratify the ritual '*Bersih Desa*' at the village. Here are the following steps we used:

a) Determination of Research Objects

The object of this study was the people of Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia.

b) Research Data Collection (Heuristics)

This study was based on two groups of data sources, namely primary and secondary data. Secondary data were collected from various places and includes, among others, published works, research results related to the problems studied, and also sources published over the internet (Rochwulaningsih et al. 2017; Rochwulaningsih et al. 2019). In relation to primary data collection, the techniques used were participatory observation and interview (Rochwulaningsih, 2015; Alamsyah, 2015; Indrahti et al. 2017; Indrahti et al. 2018; Rochwulaningsih, 2018; Amaruli et al. 2022). Participatory observation was carried out by conducting a series of visits (Basuki, 2006; Alamsyah et al. 2020) to Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency, and participated in a series of *Bersih Desa* ritual ceremonies in Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency as the research site. We conducted an interview to obtain information about *Bersih Desa* ritual at Blimbing Village.

The structured interview was applied in this study using planned questionnaire (open questionnaire). This kind of interview was subjected to the key informant who knew a lot *Bersih Desa* ritual in the village. The key informants were the traditional stakeholders of Blimbing Village as well as *Topeng Kona* sacred dance performers, the elders of Blimbing Village, the Head of Blimbing Village, the leader of the performing arts "Blimbing Maju". Besides, informal interview was done by spontaneous question, particularly subjected to the actors of *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing village. On March 10–22, 2022, we carried out an interview against fifty actors of *Bersih Desa* from a diverse social status. The interview was done in the early beginning of the ritual, that was on March 28–29, 2022. This was done to know how the actors celebrated the ritual.

Data Verification (Source Criticism)

The data that had been collected were referred to as raw data. In collecting the data, other data were recorded, while non-supporting data were excluded. For this reason, data selection was needed. In the historical method, this stage was called verification or source criticism. The purpose of this data verification was to determine the validity of the sources, in order to find out authentic and impartial source as to identify whether the sources were credible or not.

c) Research Data Interpretation and Analysis

The categorized data were the raw materials for data analysis. Data analysis was carried out in two stages, namely preliminary and final analysis. In the historical method, this stage was called as interpretation or source interpretation. In interpretation stage, there were two activities, namely analysis and synthesis.

d) Reconstruction of Research Results

The final stage was the reconstruction of the results of research on the existence of the ritual *Bersih Desa* in Blimbing Village, Klabang Village, Bondowoso Regency, with the title “Topeng Kona: A Sacred Dance in the Ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia” in the form of scientific articles. In writing scientific articles, we paid attention to the chronological and diachronic aspects, so that the writing of scientific articles was descriptive analytical.

Results and Discussion

The Forerunner of Blimbing Village

The people of Blimbing Village have local wisdom to appreciate and remember the efforts of the founders of Blimbing Village. From their ancestors, the community received information that the founder of Blimbing Village was Juk Seng (known as Juk Singo Ulung). *Juk* means the ancestors. There is no certainty when Juk Seng opened the land as a residence. In the collective memory of Blimbing Village community, Juk Seng was a character who chopped the forest which became the forerunner of Blimbing Village. Juk Seng came from a noble family from Blambangan Banyuwangi who liked to wander. On his odyssey to the West, he accidentally entered the star fruit forest. Juk Seng's arrival in the wilderness attracted the attention of a figure in the forest area, namely Jasiman. Jasiman came from Madura Island and lived in the forest. It was a habit in traditional society, where someone whom was seen as a figure must be tested with various challenges and supernatural powers (Interview with Tikno, 65 years old, the tradition stakeholder at Blimbing village as well as the dancer of *Topeng Kona*, on February 16, 2022).

A supernatural battle between Juk Seng and Jasiman was finally won by Juk Seng, so that Juk Seng was appointed as the head of Blimbing Village. At that time, the condition of the village was less fertile, so that Juk Seng was imprisoned to get the idea, and that the Blimbing Village became fertile. In the hermitage, Juk Seng was ordered to hold a fight to spill blood on the earth, so that it rained and impacted on the fertility of the soil. The fight was known as *Ojhung* (interview with Hidayat, the chief of performing arts “Blimbing Maju”, on March 10, 2022). *Ojhung* was an inseparable part of the ritual *Bersih Desa* in Blimbing village.

Peursen (1988) explains the function of myths in society, that myths are stories that are able to provide certain guidelines and directions to a group of people. Myths are also able to awaken people to supernatural powers. Through myth, humans are helped to be able to appreciate the forces as a force that influences and controls nature. This description is able to provide an overview of the reality that exists in Blimbing Village, that *Bersih Desa* ritual must be carried out to commemorate the founder of Blimbing Village ‘Juk Seng’ or ‘Juk Singo Ulung’. This ritual is considered sacred by the people of Blimbing Village, so that they do not dare to leave the ritual, because it can bring disaster to the community. According to Mrs. Alan (55 years old), one of the actors of the ritual *Bersih Desa* said, “if I, as the resident of Blimbing Village, do not take a part in the ritual *Bersih Desa*, later, the spirit of Juk Seng as the founder of Blimbing Village will be angry and I will not be able to harvest rice, because all are damaged”. Another argument that was expressed by

Nadia (21 years old), one of the actors of the ritual said, “as a resident of Blimbing Village, it is very unfortunate if we do not participate in the ritual *Bersih Desa*, because this event is only held once in a year and is very sacred for the villagers at Blimbing”. Another respondent named Weli (36 years old). The responses of those informants represent the answers of fifty respondents who perform the ritual. There are two kinds of answer models from fifty respondents as the representatives of their human resource background. The first part was respondents with high school background, the majority answered that the ritual must be carried out by all members of Blimbing Village community. If it was not carried out, there was a sense of worry that disaster could arise for them. The second part was the respondents with high school education background up-to tertiary level; they answered that the ritual was the obligation of all members of Blimbing Village as a form of gratitude and sent prayers for the founders of Blimbing Village who struggled to establish Blimbing Village. The responses of fifty respondents confirmed that the ritual was considered sacred by the community, and must be followed by all members of the community at Blimbing Village.

The procession of the ritual must not be left behind, among others, sending offerings to the tombs of Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman; send offerings to “*Sangger*” – a place where Juk Seng horse herds which are considered sacred by the people of Blimbing Village; *Ojhung* (a fight between two people without wearing clothes with a rattan tool beaten to the body, in order to bleed as a tool to ask Sang Hyang Widi for rain); people believe that the more blood that flows, the faster it rains, something related to myth (Peursen, 1988); *Singo Ulung* dance which is considered a representation of Juk Seng (Juk Seng was symbolized to a lion), *Tandhe’ Bini’* dance (a dance to honor Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung as the founder of Blimbing Village), and the sacred *Topeng Kona* dance as a means of certifying rituals, as well as the ritual *Bersih Desa* (interview with Tikno, 65 years old, the tradition stakeholder at Blimbing village as well as the dancer of Topeng Kona, on February 16, 2022).

Agrarian Society

Blimbing Village is a part of Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency. The majority of the people of Blimbing Village live from agriculture. The area of Blimbing Village was 152,656 Ha, and the land owned is only rice fields as the main livelihood of the residents. The rice field area is 150 Ha with only one spring, namely *Naggar Olbek* (Blimbing Village Profile, 2021). The total number of people living in Blimbing Village is 2,016 people. The education level of the Blimbing Village community is dominated by 112 elementary school graduates, 45 elementary school graduates, 32 junior high school graduates, 545 high school graduates, 36 diploma/bachelor graduates (Blimbing Village Profile 2021). The majority of the people of Blimbing Village are migrants from Madura Island (Suliyati et al. 2017; Izzah et al. 2021), where the daily language used by the community is Madurese. They came to Bondowoso during the Dutch colonial period to work on plantations established by investors in Bondowoso Regency (Izzah et al. 2021). One of the areas occupied by migrants from Madura Island is Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency.



Fig 1. The map of Blimbing Village, Klabang District (above). The map of Blimbing Village, Klabang District, as a part of Bondowoso Regency in the geographical map of East Java.
Source: Kompas.com, 2022

Natural resources that rely on an agrarian economy (Sulistiyono and Rochwulaningsih, 2013; Sulistiyono, 2017) as well as the human resources owned by Blimbing Village, allow the community to have a lot of free time to gather together to generate ideas in the form of culture. This condition allows them to support the culture that has been created by their ancestors. It has become a habit for an agrarian society whose majority of its citizens are farmers, expressions expressing gratitude are manifested in *Bersih Desa* ritual procession. In the ritual, it is not the facilities and aspects of the ritual that are put forward, but the purpose is very prioritized and become the key-value (Soedarsono in Kusmayati 2000). In addition to the ritual, several cultures that were born in Blimbing Village include *Topeng Kona*, *Tandhe' Bini'* dance, *Ojhung* and *Singo Ulung* dance.

A Series of the Procession of “Bersih Desa” in Blimbing Village

Society and culture are two inseparable aspects. In the sense that every community group, whether it is a traditional or modern society, must have a culture that cannot be separated from the supporting community, because culture is attached to individuals in a community which is manifested in the form of values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, laws and systems of behavior as well as the results of the work. Culture as a community identity is not only understood as a differentiator from other communities, but as something that can be used to get to know community life, the ways in which communities construct knowledge, display feelings, and how they act (Basri, 2014).

The role of culture becomes very large in the communication ecosystem, because cultural characteristics between communities can distinguish oral and written culture as the habit of a community in communicating its identity. In Indonesia, culture is something that cannot be separated from tradition. Tradition is not seen as an item that shows an element of antiquity (sacred) that must be preserved as a legacy of past civilizations. In fact, this point of view will raise the image of the tradition, especially oral tradition that has been revealed in various kinds of research in the history of its glorious past without actualizing it in the current situation.

One of the traditions that continues to live in the community is the tradition of the “*Bersih Desa*”. Each region has a different tale about the founding of a village that it occupies. Literacy that lives in the community in an area needs to be explored more deeply, and at the same time, it can be realized in written form as a historical track record of a society. One of them is *Topeng Kona* sacred dance that lives in Madurese ethnic community in the coastal areas of East Java, especially in Blimbing Village. *Topeng Kona* is a sacred dance that is used as a tool to validate the ritual “*Bersih Desa*” at Blimbing Village.

The ritual “*Bersih Desa*” at Blimbing Village was carried out continuously from year to year. Precisely on the 13th, the 14th and the 15th of the Month of *Shakban* (15 days before the Ramadan). In 2022, the ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village is conducted in 27–29 March, 2022. The sequence from the beginning to final for three days. The first day was pre-preparation on the 13th by slaughtering cattle and collecting ingredients from all residents for cooking. The material was called *sasoklan* which means “offering” which contained several materials:

- a. *Biddheng Gulu* (original grain coffee)
- b. *Biddheng paek* (bitter coffee)
- c. *Nasek lemak* (rice topped with coconut milk)
- d. *Lughulu* (spice)
- e. *Nasek Koning* (yellow rice)
- f. *Nasek 5 bharna* (rice with five colors)
- g. *Bress Koning* (yellow rice)

The second day on the 14th was the beginning of *Bersih Desa* which covered cooking all-seven ingredients and continued with the “*Sangger*” celebration. “*Sangger*” was a place for herding Juk Seng’s horses (see Figure 2), as well as Juk Seng’s and Juk Jasiman’s shelter and rest. It was said that in this place, there was a starfruit tree as a shelter for Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman. Therefore, the name of the tree is used as the name of the village, namely Blimbing Village. The place was considered sacred by the people of Blimbing Village. The offerings brought to Sangger included (a) *Nase’ Rasol*, a white rice placed on a plate shaped like a mount with various side-dishes, namely grilled chicken and boiled eggs. *Nase’ Rasol* is the symbol of respect or glorification of the Apostles and Prophets in Islam, so that all aspirations of Blimbing Village

community are fulfilled; (b) *Nase' Lemak*, a rice cooked with broth and slices of beef added with spices, one of which is turmeric, so that it turns yellow. *Nase' Lemak* has a binding meaning, which means that the Blimbing community still have ties with their ancestors, namely Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman; (c) *Nase' Gendhik*, a rice of five colors made from various ingredients placed on a plate in layers, forming mountains as a symbol of human qualities and miracles. The bottom layer is white rice, made of rice symbolizes the holy nature; the red color is made from mashed corn, representing anger; the yellow color is made from Javanese corn, symbolizing weakness; the black one is made from black glutinous rice, symbolizing forgetfulness; and the green one is made from green beans as a symbol of miracles; (d) *Nase' Tumpeng*, a white rice shaped as a cone (resembles a mountain), which means that a mountain is a very high place where God or deified beings live or where someone who is highly respected is living at. *Tumpeng* symbolizes the height of degree, and contains a symbol of hope for those in-power, so that one's wish can be granted; (e) *Five-color Porridge*, consisting of five colors: white, red, black, yellow and green pulp. It is a symbol of the four cardinal directions and one in the middle. The intention is that village guards from four cardinal directions and those at the center always take care of the safety of the villagers; (f) Various-side dishes: satay made of *juko' sanga' macem bigghi'*, namely a series of offerings in the form of nine beef organs cooked by burning and consist of staple (cow's leg), ear (*kopeng*), mouth (*cengor*), tongue (*jile'*), nose, throat (*tenggoro'*), liver (*ateh*), intestine (*perrok*) and lungs (*bhere'*). The meaning contained in it was seen as a symbol of controlling nine human passions. The lust for anger, the lust for pride, the lust for lust, the lust for greed, the lust for lying, the lust for talking about others, the appetite for food that is not rightfully theirs, the lust for stealing and envy; (g) *Lop kolop*, namely boiled vegetables consisting of seven kinds of vegetables and not bound by type, for example *rakara* (kara), *otok* (long beans), *langkir* (gambas), *lamtoro*, cucumber, eggplant and pumpkin as a symbol of the journey of human life through a span of time based on a cycle of seven days: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; (h) Various cakes: *jajan genak* (traditional cakes), including *tetel* (made from sticky rice) which means attachment or loyalty; *dudul*, which means fertility; *kepeng* (a plate of cassava), which means an antidote to all kinds of diseases; *tape* (made of rice), which means understanding the power of thought; *kocor*, contains a symbol of the height of degrees; *nangginang*, symbol of protection; *tegete* (cake made from various mixtures of *polowijo* seeds) as a symbol of harmony, as well as the fruits; (i) Bananas, means eliminating prejudice; (j) Various drinks, such as water in a jug taken from several water sources in Blimbing Village, which means the hope of not experiencing drought; *biddheng Gulu'* (a glass of drink made from roasted coffee beans), then a glass of ground coffee and a glass of bitter tea. These two drinks have meant to remind that in human life, there are times when it is sweet and bitter that everything still has to be lived; *lembur* (a glass of coconut water mixed with brown sugar), also known as Juk Seng's favorite drink; a bowl of sticky tape, a favorite of Juk Seng; (k) *Sekar arum*, is a collection of colorful flowers consisting of magnolia flowers, Cananga, and roses placed on *lodhong* (stopless) mixed with water, which means to always remind to behave good; (l) *Rokok klobot* and *kinangan* stuffs; (m) *Damar khambeng* (lanterns made of coconut oil); (n) Incense and burning coals placed in the hearth, as a medium to connect with ancestral spirits, namely the spirits of Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman; and (o) Coins, symbols of alms. All series of offerings are placed in a place called *ancak*. *Ancak* is a square-shaped offering place made from banana leaf fronds strung with woven bamboo as a place for offerings (see Figure 3, *Ancak* with 15 offerings) (Interview with Tikno, 65 years old, the tradition stakeholder at Blimbing village as well as the dancer of *Topeng Kona*, on February 16, 2022).



Fig 2. “*Sangger*” – a place for herding horses belonging to Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung (founder of Blimbing Village), as well as a place for shelter and rest by Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman. It is also considered sacred by the people of Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 3. *Sangger*’s greeting by putting the offerings. There were fifteen kinds of offering placed on an *Ancak*.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

Furthermore, it was proceeded with the salvation of Asta (tomb) of Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman. The celebration aimed to honor the founder of Blimbing Village, Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman. The graves of the founders of this village are sacred to the people of Blimbing Village, because in this place, the spirits of the forerunners as well as village rulers reside. As a tribute to him, a village salvation ritual is also held at this place (see Figure 4–6). The grave (*asta*) of Juk Seng and Juk Jasiman celebrations are led by Blimbing Village clerics, and are supported by all residents regardless of age. They all attended *tahlil* with full of solemnity, courtesy and respect. The community brought offerings of *nase' rosul* and *tumpeng* with side-dishes, pastries and fruits. The offerings will be eaten after *tahlil* has been over.



Fig 4. *Selamatan Asta* (tomb) of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 5. Tomb of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung (Founder of Blimbing Village) and his wife.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 6. Jasiman's tomb (the one who fought Juk Seng) and his wife. Jasiman was also considered a person who had contributed to supporting Juk Seng in establishing Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

The next salvation was called *Selamatan Tanian* (to congratulate of being grateful for the harvest and welcoming the month of Ramadan) at the house of the Head of Blimbing Village (see Figure 7) and continued with salvation in the yard of the residents of Blimbing Village (see Figure 8–9). The salvation is complemented by a joint study. The offerings for *Selamatan Tanian* are simpler than those for *Selamatan Sangger*, including: (a) *Nase' Rosul*; (b) *Nase' Lemak*; (c) 30 packs of *Nase' Bakul*, side-dishes (beef satay and *rawon*); (d) a glass of *biddheng gulu'*; (e) a glass of bitter and sweet coffee; (f) a glass of *lembur*; (g) a bowl of sticky *tape*; (h) banana stalks; (i) various cakes (traditional cakes); (j) *damar kambheng*; (k) *Mina (kinangan)*; (l) *rokok klobor*; (n) *Sekar arum*; (o) alms money; (p) incense and fireplace.



Fig 7. *Selamatan Tanian* (Congratulate of being grateful for the harvest and welcoming the Ramadan) in the house of the head of Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 8. Farmer's salvation at the T-junction of Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 9. Farmer's salvation at the T-junction of Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

The last day of the 15th was the culmination of *Bersih Desa* ritual which began with a *Naggar Olbek* salvation (spring of water) completed with *sasoklan* or offerings. *Sasoklan* or offerings in the form of yellow rice, grilled chicken, rice in a plate on which a boiled egg was placed, tumpeng rice, *nasi lemak* cooked with coconut milk, *nasi bakol* (wrapped rice), yellow rice, *ghandik* or sticky rice caked in five colors: white, black, red, yellow and green, and those were recited incantations in the form of prayers led by the traditional leaders of Blimbing Village (see Figure 10). After the prayer is finished, the offerings were washed away or thrown into a spring (*Naggar Olbek*), purposed for *muangsangkal* (rejecting reinforcements or keep away from danger).



Fig 10. Offerings in the *Naggar Olbek* salvation (spring salvation).
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

Strictly speaking, it was continued with the sacred *Topeng Kona* dance, *Singo Ulung* dance, *Jher Jer* puppet, *Tandhe' Bini'*, and *Ojhung* dance. The celebration which was attended by all residents at the T-junction of Blimbing Village (interview with Hidayat, the chief for performing art "Blimbing Maju", dated January 10, 2022).

According to Dyson's concept of enculturation in Sujarwa (1999), the ritual *Bersih Desa* is a process when individuals choose values that are considered good and appropriate for their social life, so that they can be used as guidelines for prospective actions. This concept is manifested in community involvement in the preparation of *Bersih Desa* ritual in Blimbing Village which was carried out by all residents, ranging from children to the elderly without exception. People are afraid to leave the ritual which is held every year on the 13th, 14th, 15th of the Month of *Shakban* (15 days before the month of Ramadan). The ritual has become the belief of Blimbing Village community. Once they leave it, they will experience a disaster. This has happened, where the implementation of the ritual was out of the date stipulated. As a result, many residents of Blimbing Village were in a trance, and subconsciously they said the date that the ritual should be held. Seeing such a reality, the village head held a repetition of the ritual for the second time in the year according to the reports of several residents who were in a trance (interview with Blimbing Village Head on March 12, 2022). The Head of Blimbing Village does not want to take the risk, because if the ritual is not carried out again, the community believes that disaster will occur in Blimbing Village. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ritual was still carried out.

The turning point of the ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village on the 15th of the Month of *Syakban* (March 29, 2022) with a complete series of ceremonial processions, one of the series could not be omitted. The series of the ritual processions included:

1. *Topeng Kona* Dance

Topeng Kona dance is a sacred dance of Blimbing Village. Not everyone can perform it. The dance can only be performed by Jasiman descendants. Jasiman is a character who lives in the Blimbing forest. Inadvertently, Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung entered the forest. This resulted in two physical colliding which was won by Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung. Jasiman recognized Juk Seng's superiority in martial arts and was given the opportunity to become the Head of

Blimbing Village. The movements played in the ritual with a philosophy contained in it, and nor dance in general (interview with Tikno, 65 years old, the tradition stakeholder at Blimbing village as well as the dancer of *Topeng Kona*, on February 16, 2022). This dance has its own uniqueness, because it always uses a mask in every performance. The head wears a crown (*irah-irahan tropong*), equipped with a wig made of black thread, a pair of chopsticks and a pair of *koncer* (accessories as well as property). The costumes used are dominated by red which symbolizes courage. Red is the color favored by ethnic Madurese. Thereby, the dance is a means of ratification of the ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village.



Fig 11. The sacred dance "*Topeng Kona*", danced by only the descendants of Jasiman.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 12. *Topeng Kona* as a tool to validate the ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

2. *Singo Ulung* Dance

Singo Ulung is the representation of a supernatural power and glory of Juk Seng or Juk *Singo Ulung* (founder of Blimbing Village). *Singo Ulung* literally means a lion who has unparalleled skills. It is not a lion as an animate that really lives and dances, but a representation of a real lion animal. *Singo Ulung* is made of embroidered raffia, so that it looks much like a real lion with its thick and white fur. This lion figure is performed by two dancers, one acts as the head and legs (front part), the other acts as the body, tail and legs (back side). The number of lion figures can vary (see Figure 13–15) (interview with the traditional stakeholders of Blimbing Village). *Singo Ulung* dance is accompanied by the chanting of *Langsar* gamelan music. *Singo Ulung* actors usually adjust to the movement.



Fig 13. *Singo Ulung* Dance.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 14. *Singo Ulung* Dance in the ritual *Bersih Desa* at Blimbing Village.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022



Fig 15. *Singo Ulung* Dance.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

3. Jher-Jer Puppet

It is the appearance of traditional stakeholders to honor the ancestors accompanied by the chanting of *Kasmara* Song. The song tells the history of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung (founder of Blimbing Village) equipped with *sasoklan* (offerings) and *ancak* (offering places), and continued with the chanting of the *Muangsangkal* song, as a prayer of praise to avoid disaster, which is usually conducted by sprinkling yellow rice. The following is a portrait of the traditional holder and the *ancak* (a place of the offering) as a place to put *sasoklan* (offerings).



Fig 16. Traditional stakeholders carrying yellow rice while chanting a prayer of salvation (left), *ancak* as a place of offerings (right).
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

4. *Tandhe' Bini'* Dance

This dance is a dance to honor Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung (founder of Blimbing Village). The dancers wear the typical clothes of Blimbing Village, which is red. This dance is accompanied by gamelan music entitled "*Langsar Pas Kapasan*". *Tandhe'* means a dancer, and *Bini'* means a woman.



Fig 17. *Tandhe' Bini'* dance.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

5. *Ojhung*

It is a tradition that combines dexterity, religion and self-defense, to which the players whip each other using rattan without wearing clothes. The players are not allowed to hit or whip other limbs apart from the back. They just wear pants with a naked upper-body. Before carrying out the *Ojhung* game, the player is firstly given an antidote (immunity) by the handler to avoid pain by reciting a spell. *Ojhung* performance did not last long. If one of the players who gets hit is injured and bleeds, then the show will end immediately. With the dripping blood of *Ojhung* players, it will be a symbol of sacrifice. According to the beliefs of the people at Blimbing Village, when this happens, the ritual is considered valid, and the hope for soil fertility will soon be realized through rain that will water the earth, particularly in Blimbing Village. *Ojhung* is used as a ritual to bring down the rain – the more blood dripped, the faster rain will be (Izzah, 2020).



Fig 18. *Ojhung*.
Source: Research Documentation, 2022

Conclusion

In almost all parts of Indonesia, people have the habit of holding rituals, especially the ritual *Bersih Desa* which aims to honor the struggle of their ancestors. The ritual has a goal, so that people get safety and prosperity in their lives. However, *Bersih Desa* is performed by the community and is differed from one place to others. Each region has a different story (tale) about the history of their village, one of which is the ritual *Bersih Desa* carried out in the East Java, Indonesia. The East Java, especially the ex-Besuki residency districts (Banyuwangi Regency, Jember Regency, Bondowoso Regency, Situbondo Regency) are very unique and exotic. The large number of migrants who came from Madura Island seek a decent life in the Dutch colonial era to Besuki Residential area, and left many exotic cultures. This is due to the acculturation between Javanese culture and Madurese culture which gave birth to a variety of different cultures in each region. The Javanese is an ethnic minority in the area of the ex-residence of Besuki. However, the marriage of both cultures gave birth to cultures that were unique and has high value differed from the culture of origin of the migrants. Each village in a sub-district produces different cultures even though they are in the same district. For example, Alas Sumur Village, Pujer Subdistrict, Ramban Kulon Village, Cerme Subdistrict, Blimbing Village, and Klabang Subdistrict, where all of these subdistricts are parts of Bondowoso Regency. However, the villages spread across several sub-districts have different cultures from one another.

The most interesting was the culture that lived in Blimbing Village, Klabang District, Bondowoso Regency. The culture of the people at Blimbing Village was superior to the culture of other villages outside the Klabang District. One of them is the sacred ritual *Bersih Desa*, where it combined the imagination of its ancestors in the form of a high-level masterpiece of culture. The ancestors were able to tell stories about their ancestors, not ordinary people, but from a group of nobles who came from Banyuwangi. The ancestors of the Blimbing Village community were able to carry and lead the people's thinking, that they were descended from nobles and not ordinary people with the appearance of the founding figure of Blimbing Village named Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung.

It was difficult to obtain authentic data to obtain the truth about the figure of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung in contemporary chronicles. The information obtained comes from oral traditions that lived in the community. Apart from

Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung figures, there was another character who also had a very important role, namely Jasiman. According to his ancestors that Jasiman came from Madura Island. The characters showed that Jasiman liked fighting and had a sporty nature. This was proven when Jasiman fought with Juk Seng who entered his forest area, Jasiman was defeated by Juk Seng. Caused of his defeat, Jasiman gave Juk Seng the opportunity to become the Head of Blimbing Village.

The intelligence and local wisdom possessed by the ancestors of Blimbing Village, are able to produce masterpieces of high value summarized in the ritual *Bersih Desa*, such as *Topeng Kona* dance, *Singo Ulung* dance, *Tandhe' Bini'* dance, and *Ojhung* dance. The masterpiece is the result of a marriage of two cultures, namely Javanese culture (represented by Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung) and Madurese culture (represented by Jasiman). The result of the marriage of the two cultures produces a migrant culture that is of high value and different from the area of origin of the migrant.

We argued that *Topeng Kona* dance was used as a tool to validate the ritual *Bersih Desa*. There were three reasons underlying it. First, the figure behind the dancer was actually a picture of a character named Jasiman. The victory of the Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung figures became meaningless if the Jasiman figures did not give Juk Seng the opportunity to become the number one person in Blimbing Village. Second, the dancers always wore masks, which meant that Jasiman was the figure behind the success of Juk Seng or Juk Singo Ulung in developing Blimbing Village. Third, the high respect for the figure of Jasiman who came from Madura and became the majority of the population of Blimbing Village. It was proven that those who were entitled to dance *Topeng Kona* as a sacred dance were the descendants of Jasiman who came from Madura.

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